

**Better Health Care for All Nevadans**

*I want to make better health care available to every Nevadan by cutting costs, improving quality and expanding access. This website provides a few examples of how I am working to achieve these goals. For more information about specific health care issues, please click on one of the links/categories below.*

**Add a Prescription Drug Benefit to Medicare**



*”The cost of health care is just too high — especially the cost of prescription drugs. We have to make sure Nevadans can afford good health care, including the medicine they need.”*

Adding an affordable, comprehensive and voluntary drug benefit to Medicare has been one of my top priorities in the Senate. That’s why in June I voted to support a bipartisan prescription drug bill in the Senate. That bill wasn’t perfect, but it was a good first step toward providing a comprehensive drug benefit under Medicare.

Unfortunately, negotiations with the House of Representatives made the bill much worse. So when it came back to the Senate, I had no choice but to vote against the final bill. The bill will leave millions of seniors worse off than they are today, and it threatens the future of the Medicare program itself. It is a bad bill for the senior citizens of Nevada and a bad bill for the country.

Specifically, the legislation would make tens of thousands of seniors in Nevada pay more for prescription drugs. That’s because thousands of Nevada seniors who receive health care from their former employers will lose that coverage. And seniors who qualify for Medicaid will have to pay more for their medications than they do now.

The new drug benefit created in the bill is confusing and inadequate. For example, a senior must spend \$810 out-of-pocket per year before he or she will receive a penny from Medicare. And a senior who spends \$5,000 a year on drugs will still be stuck with almost 80 percent of the bill. That is not the kind of prescription drug coverage Nevada seniors deserve.

Perhaps worst of all, because of pressure from the big drug companies, the bill explicitly prohibits Medicare from negotiating lower drug prices on behalf of America’s 40 million seniors. And the bill does not allow Americans to import drugs from Canada where prices are much lower.

Finally, this legislation changes Medicare by limiting the amount of money that can be spent on the program — meaning, over time services could be cut and premiums will likely rise.

In spite of these problems, and at the President’s urging, Congress narrowly passed the bill. I want you to know that I am redoubling my efforts to get Nevada seniors the drug coverage they need. I will continue fighting until Congress passes legislation that provides a more generous drug benefit, lowers the cost of prescription drugs, protects retiree health coverage, and strengthens the Medicare program for this and future generations.

**Generic Drugs**

I support legislation that has passed the Senate that would bring equally effective, lower-cost generic drugs to the market faster. Generic drugs offer all Americans huge savings. Today, the average consumer pays 238 percent more for brand name drugs — an average difference of \$45.96. This would allow all consumers to enjoy greater access to more affordable drugs.

**Reimportation of Drugs from Canada**

I support legislation to improve access to lower-priced drugs by allowing wholesalers and pharmacists to import prescription drugs from Canada that have been proven safe and effective by the Food and Drug Administration. The legislation has important safeguards to ensure the integrity of drugs imported from Canada.

“We must protect the special relationship between patients and their doctors. And we have to find new treatments for deadly diseases like cancer.”

**Protect Patients from Insurance Bureaucrats**

Doctors, not insurance companies, should make medical decisions. I support a strong Patients’ Bill of Rights that would ensure that all Americans have timely access to the emergency care, specialists, clinical trials and the prescription medications they need. Patients must come before profits.

**More Money to Combat Deadly Disease**

I have worked to double our national medical research budget over the last five years. This investment will ben-

efit a wide range of illnesses, from cancer to diabetes, Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s. I will continue to use my position on the Appropriations Committee to fight for more money to help prevent, treat and cure chronic conditions and diseases.

**Better Cancer Care in Nevada**

We need a cutting-edge cancer center to conduct research and provide treatment so Nevadans do not have to travel far away for the best care possible. I worked to secure millions of dollars of federal support for the creation of the Nevada Cancer Institute, a comprehensive cancer center that will serve the entire state. I am the author of a new law that will help Nevada improve its scientific infrastructure so we may attract more federal resources for cancer research.

**More Doctors for Seniors**

Our nation is not yet prepared to meet the challenges associated with care for the elderly. In the U.S. today, there is a shortage of geriatricians, doctors specially trained to recognize and treat the complex health problems of the elderly.

I am leading efforts to encourage more doctors to become certified in geriatrics by proposing loan forgiveness programs. I am working to improve Medicare reimbursement for geriatricians to account for the extra time required to effectively treat the elderly. I support legislation that would allow Medicare to cover geriatric assessments for seniors with complex health needs. Nevada has one of the fastest growing senior populations in the nation, and greater access to geriatric care will help all of our seniors live longer, more independent lives.

**Improve Long-Term Care**

I support a number of initiatives that will allow seniors to remain independent. I worked to create the National Family Caregiver Program and support tax credits for family caregivers. Recently I secured federal funds to establish Senior Lifeline, a network of supportive health care and social services in a Las Vegas neighborhood where there is a high concentration of seniors. I have led efforts to protect seniors in nursing homes and other long-term care settings. I passed legislation in the Senate that would establish a national registry of known abusers and would require all long-term care workers to undergo FBI

criminal background checks.

### **Prevent Cancer Clusters**

Since 1997, 16 children from the small community of Fallon have been diagnosed with leukemia. Sadly, three of these children have since lost their battle with cancer. I convinced the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to launch its first federal investigation into a cancer cluster in 20 years in Fallon. In order to prevent future cancer clusters, I introduced the Nationwide Health Tracking Act which would track and correlate cancer and other diseases with possible environmental causes. This legislation also creates a federal rapid response to help communities, like Fallon, respond to cancer clusters. I secured million dollars to start health-tracking pilot programs, including one in Fallon.

To provide immediate relief for the Fallon families, I secured \$12 million for the construction of a water treatment facility to remove arsenic from drinking water and is providing bottled water to the area schools.

### **Fight Breast Cancer**

In Nevada, an estimated 1400 new cases will be diagnosed in 2003, and approximately 300 women in Nevada will die of breast cancer this year. I was proud to be recognized by the National Breast Cancer Coalition (NBCC), the nation's largest breast cancer advocacy group, for my work on this critical issue. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have worked to direct hundreds of millions of dollars to the Department of Defense Peer-Reviewed Breast Cancer Research Program and to the National Institutes of Health for breast cancer research.

I worked to enact the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Treatment Act, which guarantees treatment for women who were found to have breast or cervical cancer through a federally funded screening program. I have also supported legislation to end the process of "drive-through" mastectomies as well as legislation that requires insurance companies to cover the cost of reconstructive surgery after a mastectomy.

I am the lead sponsor of legislation, the Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act, that would give scientists the resources they need to study the potential links between breast cancer and the environment. If passed, this legislation would lead to a better understanding of the causes of breast cancer and improve our ability to prevent new cases of breast cancer.

"Every Nevadan deserves good health care, but too many are going without health insurance. We have to expand coverage and remove other barriers to health care."

### **Cover the Uninsured**

The latest Census Bureau report

found that the number of uninsured Americans sky-rocketed to 43.6 million in 2002. Nevada ranks 11th in the nation for those without health insurance. Roughly 607,000 Nevadans under the age of 65 went without health insurance for at least part of 2002.

**Expand SCHIP** - I support expanding current programs to cover the growing number of uninsured. For example, many parents would become insured if they - like their children - were able to enroll in Medicaid or the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). I support legislation that would allow states to provide health coverage to uninsured parents who have children eligible for Medicaid and SCHIP. I also support allowing states to cover legal immigrant children, parents, and pregnant women under Medicaid and SCHIP.

**Tax Credits for Small Business** - Because small businesses have an especially difficult time providing health insurance, I support legislation that would provide a tax credit for small businesses to offer health coverage to their employees.

**Support Insitutions that Care for the Uninsured** - I have secured funding to build the Women's Center and Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at University Medical Center of Southern Nevada. These efforts have increased access to prenatal and neonatal care to Nevada women without health insurance. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I will continue to support increased funding for Nevada's community health

### **Increase Access to Mental Health Care**

Mental illnesses are just as real as physical illnesses and deserve to be treated as such. That is why I will continue to fight for full parity with respect to health insurance coverage for mental illnesses. I led the first and only effort to create and implement a national strategy for suicide prevention. As part of this effort, I secured \$1.5 million to create a National Suicide Prevention Research Center in Las Vegas.

### **Eliminate Health Care Barriers for the Disabled to Work and Work**

**Incentives Improvement Act** - I fought to pass this law that allows individuals with disabilities to have great access to Medicaid or Medicare coverage when they go to work. Previously, people with disabilities would become ineligible for Medicaid or Medicare if they worked, forcing a choice between health care and employment.

**Family Opportunity Act** - I am working to enact legislation that would allow families of children who have disabilities to purchase Medicaid coverage for their children. Many children with significant disabilities do not have access to comprehensive health services because their insurance does not cover the care they need. Their parents often forgo better jobs in order to remain eligible for coverage of these services under Medicaid.

### **Eliminate Health Disparities in Women-Specific Illnesses**

When I first began my work as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I was dismayed to find that women-specific diseases had been shortchanged when it came to research funding. I have made it my mission to remedy this inequality and it has been a tireless advocate for increased research for: interstitial cystitis, multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue syndrome, and inflammatory bowel disease, osteoporosis, as well as ovarian, breast and cervical cancer.

### **Equity in Prescription and Contraceptive Coverage**

Women of reproductive age pay 68 percent more in out-of-pocket medical expenses than men, largely due to their reproductive health-care needs. I am the sponsor of bipartisan legislation, the Equity in Prescription and Contraception Coverage Act of 2003 (EPICC), that requires insurance plans that provide coverage for prescription drugs to provide the same coverage for prescription contraceptives. I passed a small part of this legislation that requires federal health plans to cover contraceptive services. now I am working to ensure that all women, not just federal employees, can have access to affordable contraception.

